

I CHURCH, YOU CHURCH, ARE WE CHURCHING?

From a verb to a definition

Back to the roots of what
Church is meant to be...

By Arão Tomé Guerreiro

Edited by Cherrelle Eid and Lyndal Walker

Let me introduce myself. I am a business consultant and virtually an entrepreneur. One of my main tasks is to write business plans. If someone hires me to write a business plan, I am responsible to deliver it on a certain date. I'm free to write it whenever and wherever I want. I can do it in the morning, at night, in the office, on the sofa, next to the pool or at the shopping centre. I can do it at any time and in any place as long as the document is properly done for the agreed date. What is important here? The way I do it or the ultimate goal of getting that document produced? Of course, just getting the job done at the right moment!

Means versus Goal

Lets take this example to our thinking about Church. Sometimes due to culture and tradition we tend to give more priority to the "means" than to the "goal". People go to Church, they know all the

famous worship songs, they "speak Christian" using cliché evangelical phrases and even, are engaged with several activities in the Church ecosystem during the week. They do all the "means", all the nice works, but do they know the real goal of the Church? Is the definition of Church deeply rooted in their culture and minds or did simply going to another Church meeting become the goal? Does Church exist because we have meetings, or do we have meetings because we are the Church...?

What is the goal?

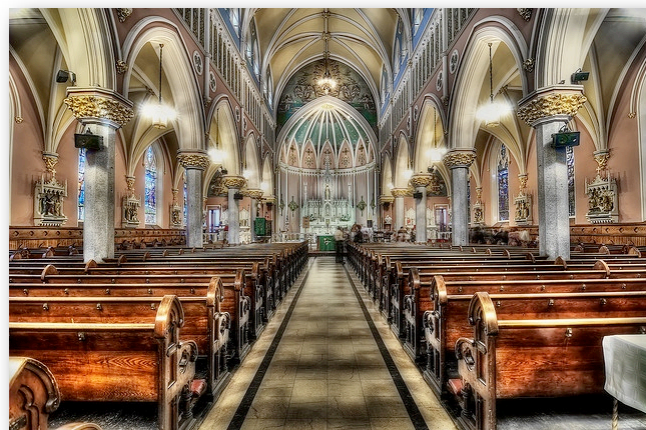
So, what should this goal be? If going to Church is not a right goal, what is Church really about then? Let's go to the root of the definition of Church, let's see what the Scripture tells us:

Firstly, the Bible states that the Church is a body - "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ *in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the*

Church." (Colossians 1:24 - NIV); "The human body has many parts, but *the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.*" (I Corinthians 12:12 - NLT).

Secondly, the body is called to stay unified - "*I pray that they will all be one*, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me." (John 17:21 - NLT); "Make every effort to keep yourselves *united in the Spirit*, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future." (Ephesians 4:3-4 - NLT).

Thirdly, the body is called to edify and stir each other - "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the *perfecting of the saints*, for the *work of the ministry*, for the *edifying* of the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-12 - KJV); "And let us consider one another in order to



stir up love and good works, not forsaking the *assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25 – KJV).

Fourthly, the body is called to make disciples – “*Go therefore and make disciples* of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.” (Matthew 28:19 – KJV).

So shortly, the Church is a body composed by members. Being a member of a body means that everyone has a function. Just as my science teacher taught me, every cell in my body works to serve all the other cells. That’s exactly what should happen in the body called Church. We are made to stay unified, to make disciples, to edify and stir each other. But... are we actually being this type of biblical Church? In a wonderful two hour meeting where we sing with a band and listen to a single person preaching: are we really being this type of Church that the bible instructs us to be? Isn’t that type of Church more of an event instead of a coordinated body - a body, where there is close relation between members and people outside? Where people help each other, people motivate each other, and people discuss their doubts and perspectives on things?

So here is my question for you: do you dare to look beyond tradition? Do you dare to question the “doing Church behaviour” to “being Church as Jesus instructs you to be?” The apostle Paul says in Romans 12:2, “...do not be conformed to this world, but be



Does Church exist because we have meetings, or we have meetings because we are Church...?

“To renew our mind is as setting it to its initial Configuration.”

Arão Tomé Guerreiro

transformed by the renewing of your mind..,” (NKJV). This means refreshing our ideas from time to time and knocking down some walls that tradition and repetition build inside of our minds. To renew our mind is as setting it to its *initial configuration*.

Jesus said that where two or three gather in His name, there He is (Matthew 18:20). This does not imply any restriction on the physical place. People meet where people usually are: at home, in the office, in a bar, on a garden bench, in a community building, in a meeting room, inside the car, under a tree....

Change!

Currently we are seeing an increasing dissatisfaction with the traditional concept of church. People know there is much more than just attending a nice event on

Sunday. There are two concepts that work as indicators of this renewal of the Church from being a Churchgoer to actually ‘Being Church’ as Jesus instructed.

The first indicator is the increase of *Housechurching*. This is a neologism that defines the gathering of people in the name of Jesus in any intimate place, mostly at homes. People gather in this way to genuinely nurtured from the Bible in meetings leaded by the Holy Spirit. In Housechurching there are no hierarchies, each one is being considered equal, and there is opportunity for the individual God given gifts to be used. At the Housechurching level it becomes possible to have a personal relationship with your brothers and sisters which allows the making of disciples and more mutual effective edification. People can simply talk with each other and listen. For, let’s be frank, despite the modern name Housechurching is going back to the roots,

“So here is my question: Do you dare to look beyond tradition? Do you dare to question the “doing Church behaviour” to “being Church as Jesus instructs you to be?”

renewing our minds from all the concepts of Church as being a temple, an organization or a label. Housechurching is nothing more than two or a few more gathered in the name of Jesus with all the honesty and simplicity that it can have.

It is this close relationship among brothers and sisters that promotes growth at the individual level, this gets reflected in the total body. Have you ever seen a bamboo stick? Bamboo has greater tensile strength (or resistance to being pulled apart) than steel, and it withstands compression better than concrete. Bamboo is a plant of which its stem is a cane. Its resistance is possible because the body of the cane is formed by several parallel fibres that support each other. If some fibres are rotten, the whole stick loses the ability to stress against pressure. But if all the fibres are in perfect condition that entire stick is strong and suitable for numerous purposes. In the same way we are interdependent in the Body of Christ: this is unity!

Real Unity is Powerful

We all know about them: men meetings, women meetings, youth meetings, businesspeople meetings, elders meeting! But when the body is called to be unified, it does not necessarily mean to bring together people with the same characteristics. No! Confrontation should be there! It is an indicator of different parts of the body that balance each other. So, real unity is not just meeting with people of your age or background. It is about removing all the adjectives from our Christianity. Strip them all and leave only the commitment to Jesus... This is what unifies the Church. You understand now why Jesus wants to be the Head of His body? How simple is that!

For the Lord says, "And afterwards, I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (Joel 2:28). All "flesh" in the body is building and edifying each other because they are unified in Christ!

Jesus calls each of us individually to have a unique purpose in life. But as a body we're also called to be salt and light to this world. How can we carry this task if the Church nowadays is not properly united? Could you imagine seasoning a nice steak of meat with salt but after you cook it a part tastes bitter, another part tastes sweet, another tastes sour and at the end you notice that there's only a light taste of salt in that meat? I guess the world is experiencing the same. Instead of feeling the good salty taste of the steak, each bite produces a

"When the body is called to be unified, it does not necessarily mean to bring together people with the same characteristics. No! Confrontation should be there, it is an indicator of different parts of the body that balance each other."

different flavour, because what we see is a series of segmented and differentiated Churches competing against each other...

The second indicator that reveals the Church acting like a unified body is its works. We must be aware that God expects us to be an influence in this world for its good. And this influence must be done as a single body. God told to King Solomon: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." (II Chronicles 7:14). Quoting Os Hillman in a recent devotional about unity: "When there is unity, there is power. Scripture tells us five will chase 100, but 100 will chase 10,000 (see Lev 26:8). There is a dynamic multiplication factor in unity of numbers. We are a hundred times more effective when we are a unified group. Imagine what God could do with a unified Church." So, if the Church humbles and prays, the whole land will fructify, and the result will be exponential in order to the amount of members (re)united. *Unity is about joint efforts and not about competition amongst groups.*

The first century Church knew this and we can see Paul's apostolic policy: "My ambition has always been to preach the Good News where the name of Christ has never been heard, *rather than where a church has already been started by someone else*" (Romans 15:20 – NLT); "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye *be perfectly joined together in the same mind* and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10 – KJV). *The first century Church had no denominations, only geographical references.* And when a missionary work was about to begin, it was always in a community where no missionary work had begun before in order to not compete with it. If it was in a region where Church was already planted, the effort would then be *to edify what was already started by others.*

The 'Works of the Church', which can be initiatives such as community prayer amongst Christians or activities designed to bless and reach the entire society. I crave to see simple interdenominational prayer groups pop up everywhere; in universities, in businesses, in municipalities. Why do we make things more

complicated than needed? Start thinking from the unity we have in Christ, and walk from that for the sake of others. Unity implies knocking down great mental walls. We have to renew our minds to the way the bible instructs us to be Church. *The Church is the only institution that the Lord Jesus is coming back for.* He is coming for a perfect and unified Church. A Church with one mission: *Having Jesus as Lord and Head of the Church.*

YOU are called to be the Church

Therefore, let's keep in mind what we are called to be and act responsibly to enable each one's spiritual growth. Let's constantly renew our minds and genuinely seek to be a united Church composed by committed members who edify each other: which is an active work, not a passive one.

It's each Christians responsibility as a member, to be a **S I N G L E** body. You have to be aware that God chose to live inside of **YOU**, not in a building, denomination, worship band or only a specific preacher. So, after all, it's all about **BEING** Church, not just attending one. Are you His Church?

Feel free to send your questions/reactions/
speaking engagements to the writer:

atg@araoguerreiro.com

Arão Tomé Guerreiro is a business consultant for start-up companies in Portugal. During his MBA in one of the leading business schools in Madrid, he found out that the economic principles taught, were mostly not founded on the principles that the bible teaches. From there he started searching what the bible teaches on Stewardship and money. Right now he is involved in different ministries and enjoys writing and speaking on topics connected to the Church and Stewardship.



**So, after all, it's all
about BEING Church,
not just attending
one...**

Are you His Church?